

## IMPRESSIONS OF THE CONFERENCE.

After our experiences last year, the calm, silence and orderly comfort of our surroundings at Bedford College deserved far more than the ordinary conventional vote of thanks. There seemed on Tuesday afternoon to be more outsiders present than students—no doubt many who generally appear were too much tied by professional or war work to be present. The discussion on Miss Rankin's paper was animated enough to testify to its value. The principal point brought out was the necessity of the discipline of school life for the social development of character. The arts of seeing, hearing and speaking, as manifested in colour, rhythm and command of our own and other languages were also held to be part of the art of living to be taught preparatory to serious school studies.

Professor de Burgh's paper, which followed, was so interesting and full of personality and force, and the scheme he drew up for a chronological peep at world history down to Charlemagne in twenty-five lectures was so interesting, that those present were inclined to applaud without discriminating. The weak spot in his fascinating scheme was the little he made of personal character—like Pericles he "forgot Sparta," and like Hannibal he belittled Fabius. Personal character has been and will always be the factor which cannot be foreseen in human affairs. He advocated the use of contemporary literature and authorities, but those faithful to Plutarch will feel that he, like Sir Walter Scott, is doubly valuable for being a link between otherwise distant epochs. Historical sequence is a matter of cause and effect, and, brilliant as he was, Professor Burgh was not always clear on the realization of its importance. No doubt, had there been time for any discussion these points could have been

elucidated, but it was five o'clock and the carnal mind wanted tea.

The Tuesday evening meeting was quite the most brilliant of all remembered conferences. The Bishop's opening words testified strongly that the life within the man is far stronger than his changing circumstances, and he showed how "forty years" in the Bible implies the change from one generation to another, the time possible for a change of heart and character to influence racial history.

Miss Evelyn Underhill's address was beautiful, and alas! one felt that everybody felt its beauty and not its practicality. Every word *was* practical. It is quite true that we are horribly afraid when we discern spiritual capacities in a dawning character, and generally do our best to make athlete, scholar or ordinary person over what God meant to be a seer and a "dreamer devout." That "conversion" is an evidence of dislocation and failure is only too true, and we know how often the converted lapse into their former state in consequence.

The two ways of approach to spiritual completion—prayer as the devotional gateway and the cultivation of æsthetic taste as the emotional—are both intensely practical and within the human power of all. May her voice not have cried in the wilderness in vain.

Monsieur Emile Cammaerts on the need for international comprehension was simply delicious; wit, understanding and broad outlook swept away the fictions of Belgian sentimentality, French degeneracy, or English selfishness. His final recitation of Paul Claudet's "*Tant que vous voudrez, Mon Général*" was something to be glad all one's life that one had heard—a genuine expression of the force and feeling of a whole nation at its highest.

On Wednesday morning we came down heavily to bodies



as exemplified in babies. Dr. Barbara Tchaykovsky spoke very strongly of the need for proper and definite teaching of the facts of life. Sometimes her tone was rather unfortunately reminiscent of the militant suffragette doctrine of man as the wolf and woman as the lamb, for after all there are she-wolves! but all would agree as to the necessity of upholding the sacramental view of marriage. In the discussion it was very wisely said that mothers have got ahead of the fathers on many educational points to-day and it is our boys who especially need to have their views and ideas expanded and ennobled now. Much practical information was given as to Infant Welfare Centres and of the help which they sorely need to found "Mothers' Arms" in poor districts.

Mrs. Clare Goslett's point of view was the entire antithesis to that of Miss Underhill the evening before. She spoke for the normal—the healthy mind in the healthy body—and though all she said about health being at the bottom of much naughtiness and wrong development is true, one completely missed the spiritual note; a healthy child can and does "give place to the devil" or entertain angels, but the normal child, as sketched for us, was just an intelligent, jolly little animal. One particular point she made with which many would hotly agree, the sin and shame of exploiting children's charm for "charity" as flag-sellers, etc., in our public streets!

In the afternoon a student gave a very sensible little talk on *how* to give a Scripture lesson and gave one or two most excellent examples of what P.N.E.U. training can make of children. Unfortunately, her own lesson did not carry out her own recommendations; it took thirty-five minutes to teach children nothing but two short Scripture passages they would have learnt in fifteen in the practising school. The

children learnt admirably the little they were given, but they got no teaching, only the glamour of a pleasing personality, which captivated most of the audience also; but had the lesson been "a crit"—well, the standard could have been higher!

Then Mr. Clement Parsons gave us an admirable plea that boys should learn to be practical and useful house carpenters, especially those to whom it did not appeal naturally, and that they should learn from expert men and not from books and that they should do useful jobs and not make fancy presents.

After which came the end, so far as this reporter is concerned.

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